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EDITORIALS

Testing The Competence of Jewish Leadership

THE proposed $10,000,000 drive by the recently established Greater New York Fund, Inc., for the benefit of the Protestant Welfare Federation, the Catholic Charities, the Jewish Federations of Philanthropy and a number of non-sectarian agencies, is, we should say offhand, to be heartily commended. There is no question but that it should receive the fullest support of everyone in the community. This newly created community fund will finally provide the mechanism, so long woefully unavailable, for securing contributions from corporations, public utilities, quasi-public enterprises and from the large ranks of employed and organized labor. Although not in any real sense a community chest, this fund will provide large and very essential supplementary monies required to maintain existing social services in the City of New York.

But THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST is interested in the project primarily because it raises many serious questions which it is important for Jews to ponder over, whether they live in New York and thus are immediately confronted with the need of solving them, or in other communities which may be influenced to follow New York's example. To Jewish Federations and to the leaders of Jewish philanthropy, such interdenominational community-wide agencies for money-raising purposes offer a number of clear-cut challenges:

1. Will there be a reexamination of present Federation set-ups, particularly with reference to the place and the relative importance of Jewish educational and recreational agencies among their present constituents?
2. To what extent can and will these Jewish educational, character-building and recreational agencies benefit by the additional funds which such city-wide fund-raising organizations will make available?
3. Will Federations make any effort to differentiate between those physically and economically rehabilitative services which have no sectarian implications, and those others which are clearly Jewish in motivation, in content and in objective?

In many communities where Jewish Federations have been beneficiaries of Community Chests, these issues have had to be faced. The Jewish National Welfare Fund has been one of the adjustments which Jewish communities have made to meet the obvious necessity of withdrawing certain types of Jewish organizations from the class of community chest bene-

ficiaries, yet supporting them separately and independently by the Jewish community as a whole. That non-sectarian community funds should not require Jews to support Catholic or Protestant religious or educational enterprises should be accepted as a basic principle. And by the same token, we should not expect that Catholic or Protestant monies be diverted to support Jewish Talmud Torahs, religious schools, and other educational agencies which have any religious or specifically ethnic content. What may appear a blessing at the beginning, may ultimately prove an unwelcome boomerang. An intelligent, realistic approach would insist upon preliminary, careful study.

Were a Jewish Community Council in existence in New York City, there would be a forum to which these questions could be brought for thoughtful consideration and discussion. Unfortunately, there is no Jewish council there, nor any signs of even the beginnings of a city-wide Jewish Welfare Fund. Consequently, problems for which, in many other cities, machinery exists for intelligent and sympathetic handling, stand isolated in New York. How and by whom are they to be solved?

We cannot underscore too emphatically the serious import of this situation. Not alone in the interest of a more satisfactory support of Jewish religious educational and recreational enterprises but also in the interest of safeguarding the present good-will relationships between Jews and Christians, we urge that the questions outlined above receive early attention by a New York city-wide representation of Jewish leaders. We must not follow a policy of drift and nonchalance on these matters, expecting that in some inevitable way these problems will solve themselves. It is not usual for problems to be solved in that fashion. On the contrary, they keep breeding new problems, and frequently yield offspring of a much more aggravated character than the old.

At the moment we know of few more serious questions with which Jewish leadership in New York should be concerned. New York Jews must not procrastinate, must not blind themselves to the need of immediate attention to these matters. To hesitate and to equivocate will be the counsel of the confused and will be injurious to the welfare of Jewry in that city. What is worse, failure to deal understandingly and competently with these matters is likely to result in serious repercussions in other Jewish centers throughout the country. It is our fervent hope that Jewish leadership will meet this test of competence on the highest level.

How Not To Defend Democracy

ELSEWHERE in this issue, Mr. Louis Minsky urges a point of view shared, we think, by thousands of people, Jewish and non-Jewish alike. A program for the perpetuation of democracy, he maintains, must be concerned not only with preventing Fascism from making progress, but also with preventing Communism from making headway. Catholics have taken upon themselves to combat Communism, but they have failed to be equally vociferous against Fascism. The Jews, on the other hand, are especially concerned with fighting Fascism and Nazism, but are not so vociferous against Communism. If the aim of each of these policies is to preserve democracy, then they have both failed in their purpose. But let Jews and Catholics unite in combatting both Communism and Fascism, and we will have "the best possible assurance that neither will make progress in America.

We fully agree with Mr. Minsky when he maintains that a practical program for defending democracy must entail two objectives — the attainment of economic democracy and the preservation of civil liberties. However, we question very much whether joining in an anti-Communist crusade will further the cause of democracy. Fighting the 'red-menace,' 'atheistic communism', etc., has become a power

technique on the part of reactionaries and Fascists to rally support against liberal and progressive measures, individuals and movements. The method is quite simple. First, surround the word "Communist" with every diabolical connotation from 'free love' to 'violence and bloodshed.' Then attack your opponent as "a Communist" and arrogate to yourself the noble role of saving the people from that horrible monster "Communism." Thus Hitler, just prior to his invasion of Austria, did not print a word of the proposed Austrian plebiscite in his controlled press, but had printed instead screaming headlines about "Communist chaos and bloodshed" in Austria in order thereby to establish moral sanction and rally popular support for invading that little land. It mattered little that Austria had no Communist Party to speak of, and that the only disturbances in that land came from the Nazis.

In this country we have become accustomed to seeing every reactionary and Fascist individual and organization mask their real objectives by pretending to be fighting Communism. In fact, the exercise of civil rights—of free speech, press and assembly, is itself dubbed "Communistic" if it suits the controlling interests in any community. Thus Mayor Frank Hague of Jersey City, in his efforts to stem unionization by the C.I.O. recently declared in a public address: "As long as I am Mayor of this city, the great industries of the city are secure. We hear about constitutional rights, free speech and free press. Every time I hear these words, I say to myself, 'That man is a Red, that man is a Communist.' You never hear a real American talk in that manner."

In the face of such facts we deem it a betrayal of the cause of democracy to join in an anti-Communist crusade.

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Jewry and Democracy

By Louis Minsky

UPON the Jews, I am convinced, will fall in increasing measure the burden of the defense of democracy, just as upon the Catholic Church there has fallen the onus of the attack upon Communism. Jews have a greater stake in the survival of democracy than perhaps any other class of the population. First of all, the safety of the Jews as a group is assured to a reasonable degree only under the democratic system. Secondly, Judaism itself has traditionally had a purer form of democracy than any other religion. As is well known, any ten men may, according to Jewish custom and Jewish law, come together to organize a congregation. These may elect their own officers, select their own leader or rabbi and decide upon their own ritual, Orthodox, Conservative or Reform. The Congregation is autonomous and in no way subject to any other group in its or any other community. According to Jewish custom and Jewish law, also, any Jew may perform religious rites and there is no distinction between the members of the congregation and the rabbi, except that of learning. In addition to this there is the doctrine that every individual may approach God directly. No intermediary or form of intercession is required. The doctrine that all men are equal in the sight of God establishes the right to equality of all men. This is the essence of democracy.

The institution of the Synagogue is democratic in origin and in form of expression. Jews generally recognize no central authority. The conception of authoritarian control is foreign to the nature of Judaism and to the temperament of Jews. There are those who will argue that this pure form of democracy has re-

sulted in organizational anarchy and in an extreme form of individualism in the makeup of Jews. Nevertheless, the predilections of Jews, the historic character of Jewish life and the external forces of the political world all seem to conspire to identify the destiny of Jewry with the survival of the democratic system. Jews have so much at stake in the perpetuation of democracy that they cannot be apathetic to the dangers which confront it.

But the survival of democracy requires a program and a group of consecrated individuals to conceive it and help carry it out. Democracy will not survive by mere reliance upon the belief that it is the best of all possible systems and that its citizens are bound, therefore, to reject all other systems. The assault upon democracy must be met with a scientific plan of action.

The Catholic Church generally and the Jesuits particularly have constituted themselves the consecrated group to combat Communism. Catholics, in my opinion, have made bad mistakes in this anti-Communist crusade from which those concerned with a program for democracy can learn valuable lessons. First, Catholics have failed, through blunders in strategy, to win over many non-Catholics to the anti-Communist crusade. This crusade will never succeed in America until non-Catholics join it. Non-Catholics, however, will tend to stand aloof from any movement against Communism which is silent on the subject of Fascism. Catholics have been comparatively silent about Fascism although they are just now becoming vocal against it. This has been their greatest single blunder of strategy. Moreover, the whipping up of a frenzy against Communism, coupled with a tendency on the part of some Catholics to be indiscriminate about what constitutes Communist activity, has completely alienated many non-Catholics and even Catholics, and caused them to look with suspicion upon the whole crusade.

There has, however, developed of late a more scientific approach to the Communist question under the impetus of the more level-headed leaders of the Church. The Social Action Department of the National Catholic Welfare Conference has recently published an excellent survey of Communism in the United States in which is included a sound program of action. It is the first comprehensive report on Communist activity I have seen which is not characterized by passion and exaggeration. Its statistics I believe to be accurate and its statements coldly factual. The survey details the strength of the Communist Party, the probable number of sympathizers outside the Party, Communist affiliates and Communist controlled organizations, a discussion of present tactics and strategy of Communists in various fields, including religion, a consideration of "united front" organizations and, lastly, a constructive program of action, the gist of which is that Catholics must beat the Communists to social reform and take it out of their hands.

The important point about this survey is that it represents an attempt to formulate a realistic plan of action to prevent the growth of Communism. First, the actual strength of the enemy and its allies is stated, then the past and present strategy of the enemy is described in detail and lastly a program of counter-attack is outlined. It is especially important here to note that the whole problem is considered in its long range aspects. For example, it is emphasized that while the Communist Party has a comparatively small membership, every party member is a thoroughly disciplined individual, a "general" in his own right. The strength of the Communist movement, therefore, lies not in the number of its followers but in the force generated by this highly disciplined and consecrated body. It is also pointed out that "united front" movements are always in danger of becoming the unwitting instruments of Communism even though Communist influence may be slight at the present moment. It is part of present Communist strategy to advocate the united front against Fas-

cism but for the time being to keep Communist members and proposals in the background. On the economic front the strategy consists of encouraging a vague collectivism and of endorsing reformism as opposed to revolution, presumably with the object of subsequently disillusioning the reformists and provoking them to more violent measures.

II

If Catholics have finally projected a plan of action for overcoming Communism in America, it cannot be said that Jews have fashioned even the outline of a program for defending democracy. On the contrary, the thinking of Jews on this subject has been characterized by a vast amount of confusion.

To begin with, Jews have made the same error which Catholics have made in their anti-Communist crusade. This is to assess the problem as that of preventing a particular ideology from making headway. In the case of Catholics, this ideology is Communism; as regards Jews, it is Fascism or Nazism. Catholics have presented the issue as that between Democracy and Communism; Jews as that of Democracy versus Fascism. Under ordinary circumstances this course of action might be defensible. But it is not defensible at a time when Communism and Fascism are struggling for supremacy, the one employing cunning methods and the other unscrupulous means to achieve its ends.

Jews have fallen victim to a blind hatred of Fascism to the extent where they regard everything as good in the proportion to which it is inimical to Fascism. Communism hates Fascism, therefore it is to be welcomed as an ally against Fascism. Jews have also allowed their sympathy with the oppressed and exploited to blind them to the dangers of a Communist movement at work in a democracy, a movement which is today speaking the language of the idealistic reformer but which yesterday denounced reformers as reactionaries and which tomorrow will hang reformers as counter-revolutionaries.

It is time for Jews to become clear-headed and far-sighted on this question. The issue is not the prevention of Fascism but the survival of democracy. Despite its current pretensions and camouflages, Communism is antithetical to democracy as we understand that process in America. A program for the perpetuation of democracy must be concerned not only with preventing Fascism from making progress but also with preventing Communism from making headway. For democrats to give aid or comfort to Communism in any form is merely to hasten the destruction of democracy.

Those who fight Fascism in the name of democracy with the aid of Communism should ponder the possibilities for future danger of a Communist movement given respectability by the sanction or indifference of large numbers of citizens who are not Communists. Let us glance for a moment at Spain. At the onset of the civil war, the Loyalist side was controlled by Republican elements. This control has, however, shifted steadily to the Left and it is conceded by some observers that, in the event of a Loyalist victory, some sort of Leftist dictatorship will inevitably result. Secular social and political movements are always in danger of going to extremes since they are without the checks which religion imposes. It is necessary to judge the Communist movement not by its strength at the present but by its potentialities for evil in the future. This is what I mean by a long range viewpoint. One must see clearly ahead where Communist interference is likely to lead.

Jews are vitally interested in preventing a Fascist movement from starting in America. Nothing is so certain to create a Fascist movement, however, as the threat of a strong Communist movement. The danger of the Catholic anti-Communist crusade, so long as it remains silent on the subject of Fascism, is that it may so whip up frenzy against Communism as to enable some Fascist demagogue

to seize power in the future on the pretext of saving the nation from the Communist menace. An anti-Communist attitude would seem to be an essential strategem of a realistic anti-Fascist campaign. An anti-Fascist crusade which ignores the subject of Communism merely plays into the hands of the Communists who are at present using anti-Fascist slogans to gain power.

The starting point of a realistic program for democracy, in consequence, must be the abjuration of all totalitarian philosophies. A united front of democrats against both Communism and Fascism is the best possible assurance that neither will make progress in America. As regards Communism, it is necessary that democrats reject all schemes for collaboration with Communists no matter how negligible Communist influence and support may appear to be. They should have nothing to do with "united fronts," movements against war and Fascism which scrupulously refrain from saying anything against Communism, and the like. They should be alive to Communist tactics of "boring from within," especially in labor unions, remembering that a valid charge of Communist activity in the labor movement is likely to discredit one of the great bulwarks of real democracy. They should be derisive of Communist slogans, such as "twentieth century Americanism," "for peace and democracy against Fascism," and so on, and they should particularly reject Communist efforts to identify the Soviet System with democratic processes, bearing in mind that this cunning attempt to link democrats and Communists may, if it is not checked, discredit the term democracy altogether. In a word, as a very first step, Communists must be isolated, their slogans and tactics exposed.

Proposals for social justice must be fought out among democrats without assistance from Communists. The social justice program of the Church and Synagogue is almost as radical as that of the Communist Party. This program stands a better chance of making an impression upon those in power if it is dissociated in their minds from Communist influence. As long as rabbis or ministers participate in united fronts with Communists this religious social justice program will be suspect among those individuals and groups who hold the key to social change. Humanitarians who are tolerant of the devices of Communism because of a sympathy with its underlying economic motives contribute nothing to the cause of social progress. In fact they hinder it. Proposals for economic reorganization will be resented in the degree to which they are suspected of originating in quarters sympathetic to Communism. A radical economic program emanating from a known anti-Communist source (such as the Catholic Church) is likely to have more influence than a combination of all the united fronts yet devised.

III

Once the issue is seen clearly it is possible to proceed to the consideration of a practical program of defense. The two principal objectives need be discussed only briefly since they are well known. The first of these is the attainment of economic democracy; the second is the preservation of civil liberties.

The preservation of civil liberties is indispensable to the safety of democracy. It is easy for Jews to get excited over infringement of the civil liberties of Communists. Not so, however, in the case of Nazis. There are Jews who would welcome the suppression of Nazis. But if the Nazis are suppressed, an inevitable movement will ensue to outlaw Communists as well. Many people will be anxious to suppress Communists not because the latter are enemies of liberty but because they are enemies of property. This view will probably be condoned by the holders of power. The suppression of Communists will thus entail the possibility of interdiction of all opponents—and even critics—of the status quo, regardless of whether they are Communists or not. It is patently dangerous to follow the dictum of

Gaboriaux that "honest men are very silly to allow rascals to get the better of them on the sentimental pretext that they cannot condescend to make use of their weapons." The end never justifies the means.

As regards economic democracy, the necessity for its achievement is clear. A strong labor movement is both a bulwark against totalitarianism and a means of removing the economic injustices upon which totalitarianism feeds. Labor knows that it has a natural enemy in Fascism; hence it is one of the chief lines of defense against Fascism. On the other hand, the more rapidly unionization is effected the quicker social justice will be attained and the less will be the danger of Communism's growth.

Hand in hand with the unionization of labor, organization must be effected in many other fields. It should be remembered that *organization is the only legitimate weapon of defense which democracy has at its disposal.* It is particularly necessary to make the most effective use of this weapon because of the fact that the secret of the progress of the anti-democratic movements lies in their ability to organize and propagandize. The situation may be roughly summarized as follows: The nucleus of citizens more especially concerned with the defense of democracy must compete with organized anti-democratic groups for the allegiance of the mass of democrat-citizens who are not sufficiently aware of the issues involved automatically to reject anti-democratic ideologies. This is necessary since the objectives of the latter are cunningly disguised with a motley of confusing slogans, catch-words and phrases. In a word, the organized agitation of the anti-democrat must be met with the organized agitation of the democrat.

A beginning—but only a beginning—has been made in this direction. First, there is the recent formation of the American Association for Economic Freedom whose purpose is to work for the achievement of economic democracy. This organization came into being as an antidote to the various "citizens' committees" and vigilante groups whose aim is to thwart the realization of economic democracy. Secondly, there is the recently organized American Union for Democracy which aims at discussing ways of maintaining democracy and enlightening Americans as to its meaning. Third, there is the effort being undertaken by the National Conference of Jews and Christians to organize councils of Protestants, Catholics and Jews in cities and towns throughout the country and in the colleges of the nation. All of these movements should be given support and encouragement.

The movement to organize for democracy should be extended to other fields, especially to those areas which are most vulnerable to anti-democratic propaganda. One area in particular should be singled out. This is the field of business. History should teach us that business men are the backbone of Fascist movements. There exists a special need for an organization which will endeavor to win business over to the justice of economic democracy, and whose function it will be to try to convince business men that Fascism is a barbaric retrogression of civilization which finally enslaves capital as well as labor. The approach to business men, as to other groups, should be scientific. It should be made by business men in the language of industry. Business men may not pay much attention to the advice, the exhortation or the pleas of labor leaders, politicians or humanitarians but they are likely to give a hearing to the adjurations of other business men.

This leads us to a general principle. Sound strategy requires that the approach to various groups be made by individuals within those groups. If our aim is to convert university professors, we can look for better results if the missionary work is undertaken by other university professors than by laymen. And so on. Groups of people are inclined to listen to advice given by members of their own group while they will resent it when extended by persons outside of the group. I write this article urging Jews to have nothing to do with Communism in any shape,

form or fashion and my advice, I hope, will be given some consideration. But should a Christian write an article in a Christian periodical giving Jews the same advice it would be received with resentment by Jews; the writer might even be denounced as an anti-Semitic. It is a matter of elementary psychology.

Many of the present-day conflicts which are retarding real progress are due in large measure to the mechanistic approach to current problems. By way of example we may cite the struggle between capital and labor. The solution sought by labor is legalistic and the approach coercive. Labor's strategy consists in forcing employers in various ways to recognize unions, without regard to the conviction of employers. This legalistic solution would be more easily achieved and more permanently advanced if it were accompanied by a movement to convince employers of the logic of labor unions, through the instrumentality of a liaison group of employers who are sympathetic to labor unionization. It should be kept in mind that the viewpoint of the individual employer is moulded by a constant barrage of anti-union propaganda from business associations and chambers of commerce. This propaganda must be counteracted from within the employer's group.

It is to the advantage of labor, and necessary to the safety of democracy, that an attempt be made to achieve economic democracy not through coercion, but through persuasion. Unless the majority of employers are genuinely won over to the idea of labor unions they will seek to liquidate them at the earliest possible opportunity. The danger of Fascism will always be present if the labor movement is forced down the throat of employers. Here again it is necessary to take the long range viewpoint.

Aaron David Gordon

By Joshua Trachtenberg*

LABOR Palestine has been winning a growing body of sympathizers and adherents in this country during the past few years. Not only are Jewish trade unionists and socialists discovering the Histadrut, but many middle-class Jews have had their luke-warm Zionism confirmed and strengthened by its special appeal. In last year's elections to the Zionist Congress the Labor ticket received the largest number of votes. Several factors have undoubtedly contributed to this new-found enthusiasm: the increasing importance of Palestine to the Jewish world and the realization that Labor has played, and must continue to play, the strategic role in building and holding the country; the depression-stimulated social awareness which has aroused a desire for identification with the social idealism and program of Palestine Labor; the sentimental aura which returning pilgrims and propagandists have wrapped around the *halutz* and the *kibbutz;* others, perhaps.

Until now the scant literature in English on Labor Palestine has concerned itself primarily with the what and the how of Labor's share in the development of Palestine, and our growing interest has apparently been satisfied by this informational and descriptive material. But it was inevitable that we should sooner or later outgrow this superficial diet of facts and pictures and emotion-stirring phrases and demand a more sustaining fare. The truly significant aspect of Palestine is not the what and the how, but the why. It has more than once been observed that Palestine is a mad venture, and its pioneers madmen (let us hope, only in a manner of speaking). What is the source of this creative madness, what its ration-

* Rabbi, Jackson Heights, L. I.

ale? We have all along realized, underneath our facile sentimentalizing, that there is some overpowering *idea* behind Labor Palestine, an idea that transcends mere nationalist egoism and romantic adventurism, an idea compelling as motive, revolutionary as goal.

It is a stirring token of the coming-of-age of the Labor Palestine movement in America that we are beginning to get the literature of the why, as well as of the what and how. If we are really to understand the evolving Palestine and its impact upon world Jewry it must be through an appreciation of its underlying philosophy. Several books have appeared in recent months which lay the foundation for such an understanding. Most important among these is the "Selected Essays" of Aaron David (*Aleph Daled* has the more authentic ring) Gordon,* whose life and writings brilliantly reflected and profoundly influenced the *idea* of Labor in Palestine. In him the almost subconscious *leit-motif* of the *Yishub* found its most eloquent expression. It may still be said: "In his books and in his life he has left us the best that the new Palestine has yet had to offer." This book, which, we may hope, is but the first of a series that will make all of his writings available to the American public, is indispensable to an intelligent interest in modern Palestine. Its translator, Dr. Frances Burnce, who has ably performed a most difficult task, and Mr. Eldar Markson of Boston, who subsidized its publication, deserve our praise and our gratitude.

II

The theme of Gordon's teaching is labor. Whatever subject his pen approaches—and it ranges over the entire field of Jewish life and thought—sooner or later is drawn within the orbit of that theme. The collapse of the Biluist *Aliyah* as a creative force was an indubitable demonstration that the rebuilding of the land and the people could be achieved only through a conscious program of manual labor. Gordon did not hesitate to admit the utilitarian aim of his thought. It was a direct response to the immediate need of the nationalist cause he loved so well. But his was no impassioned advocacy of a mere practical course of action. He was a philosopher, albeit a most unsystematic and difficult one, and his program of labor grew out of a deep spiritual urge, and an elaborately reasoned attitude toward life. Labor was for him not alone the appropriate instrument for rebuilding the land; it was a powerful catalyst which could unleash the suppressed creative potencies of the human spirit, and create anew the nation, and the human race. For this reason his thought is of universal significance. Several years ago a professor of philosophy at Columbia announced to his astonished class that he had discovered, in German translation, a new prophet from the East, a man who might in time be recognized as one of the most profound social thinkers of today. His name was Aaron David Gordon.

Hans Kohn has pointed out Gordon's relation to Ahad Haam, in that for both national aims are spiritual, cultural aims. But, as must be apparent, the earthy Gordon conceived of spirit and culture as no mere abstractions, intellectualized and refined emanations from the national soul; for him these were synonymous with life, "not hothouse growths, but rooted." "A living culture embraces the whole of life," he wrote. "Whatever man creates for the sake of life is culture. . . ." "We have no culture because we have no life, for life in the diaspora is not our life." Only when we will, in Palestine, "abandon the life that was created by others, give it up as completely as we have given up their land, and . . . create here a new life, a life of our own. . . . " shall we be able to speak of culture without affectation.

In a time of divisive rabid nationalisms, when Zionism itself has been charged (and infected, too, we must admit) with

*Selected Essays of Aaron David Gordon, translated by Dr. Franes Burnce, League for Labor Palestine, 1938.

the epidemic sin of seeking the forms of power and glory, it is good to recall that Gordon's is the truer definition of our goal: "We are charged with the task of the regeneration of the nation. We must direct it toward the development of the human spirit, toward the search for truth and righteousness in its relation with other peoples and with all mankind. . . . Our national renaissance is not mere national freedom or rejuvenation, our national revival is like a resurrection of the dead . . . either there is complete achievement or none at all."

The prophetic quality of Gordon's nationalism is especially marked in his strong individualist tendency. Again and again he insists that the regeneration of the nation will be realized only through the regeneration of the individual: "Let every man be mindful, each Jew, of himself, for his individual spiritual being;" let each consciously and deliberately set as his goal "the perfection of himself . . . the deepening of his own life," and the nation will be reborn. The great value of Palestine is that it delivers the Jew from his parochial "Jewish" individuality, to a new enriching experience of his "human" individuality. Gordon sees the formal structure of the human race entirely in terms of the individual: the regenerative impulse is transmitted from the individual to the family, to the nation, which is but a larger family, and thus to mankind, the family of nations.

"There are no greater individualists, nationalists, and universalists than were the prophets," he writes. "To the degree that a nation becomes more individualistic it will concern itself primarily with the life of the entire nation, with its efforts toward the regeneration of itself. . . . It will be concerned with all of its sons, to the end that they shall become strong and well, alive, creative—not that one should live at another's expense, and wax fat by feeding on the blood and marrow of others. Then the struggle against exploiters and oppressors will not be a class-struggle, but the struggle of the nation against its parasites. [Here we meet again the individualist socialism of the prophets.] . . . For then the nation will realize that just as an individual must be honest and see in his fellow-man a brother and behave toward him in a spirit of true brotherhood, so must the nation be honest toward its fellow-nations, to see in them brothers, to behave toward them in a spirit of true brotherhood."

III

Gordon was a mystic, though he did not like the term. Mysticism does not lend itself to logical exposition; it is an intuitional apprehension of the universe, and his efforts to clothe his elemental groping toward Truth in rationalizing armor were not the happiest. The validity, or shall we say value, of his attempt to construct a theory of esthetics—whereby he opposed the "beauty of restriction," namely, the art of form, to the "beauty of expansion," which is the beauty that "lies in the light of life, in the light of existence that is within,"—need not detain us. But through these words do we behold the gleam of the man's spirit: "When you are with nature and observe, for example, a rock having no apparent beauty in its form, you seem to see in every angle of it some force of existence, some secret of life, a symbol of a higher silence, some enigma of the universe. . ." And again, "This expansive beauty lies in complete silence, in mystery, in a union of all ideas, and of all spheres into one boundless idea that shines out of the perfect whole and is hidden in every part of that whole, in every atom of it. . . ." As for man, he can "live this beauty only by elevating his life to the plane of perfect expression of the superior idea. . . . One must begin with the search for life . . . the actual manifestation of all the powers of his body and soul in their fullest scope and depth. . . . Beauty will come out of life . . . since life will be perfect."

As we piece together his disjointed thought we find that the odd, awkwardly fashioned fragments fit; they do make a

consistent picture, unlikely though that seems at the start. Gordon loved life deeply, loved its source, nature—which, again, meant life to him—and it is in his letters and his more personal writings that we are stirred by his almost passionate expression of that love. Here Gordon becomes the poet. He felt a close affinity with the world of nature; he was one with the beasts and the growing things; in his note on vegetarianism, "To N. B.," for example, one cannot fail to be moved by his deeply compassionate sympathy with all that lives.

"Herein lies the magic circle: on the one hand, the search for a new life demands a mighty spiritual force for seeking it; on the other hand, the spiritual power required for seeking it must derive its strength from the life sought. . . . Clearly, there is but one direction to look for a way out—the path to nature." Nature—life—beauty—the "superior idea;" this is the mystical progression by which man is to be reborn.

It need hardly be said that this is no vulgar "back to nature" preachment, no mirage of the "noble savage." It is absurd to demand that a return to nature imply a return to the state before civilization. The techniques which civilization has developed must be utilized to facilitate the return to nature. But Gordon rebels against the spirit of civilization which has perverted nature and destroyed *its* spirit, which treats nature as a machine, and mates the donkey with the mare to produce that unnatural, unreproductive beast of burden, the mule. Civilization dulls man to the living spirit in nature. He can recapture it in its full glory when he takes his rightful place, neither as slave nor as master, but as "a trustworthy companion to nature in life and a trustworthy partner in creation."

Again, Gordon essays a philosophical cloak to cover his intuitional nakedness. "Intellectual knowledge" which is the hall-mark of civilization, has developed at the expense of that "immediate experience" (the life of nature) which "is the path of progress of human perception up to the level that it becomes one superior perception, intellectual and intuitional, at one and the same time." "Intellectual knowledge" must serve "as the advance guard charged with the sole duty of conquering and opening up a wider and wider path for the stream of immediate experience." Nature must not displace civilization, but must be served by it.

Constantly his cry resounds: "We of today are far, and are continually moving farther away from the source of life, from nature. . . . Man has not lived nature: has not lived his own nature to the full."

IV

One of the essays in this book is entitled "Labor—The Core of the Matter." This is Gordon's epitaph—the summation of his life and thought. If it is not inscribed on his tombstone it belongs there.

He came to Palestine in 1904, at the age of 48. Prior to that date he had been a minor official on a baronial estate, and had achieved a minor local reputation as an "intellectual." He had never performed any physical labor. In Palestine he plunged into the life of unremitting and devoted toil which characterized the Second *Aliyah*. His comrades were all much younger than he, more robust and adaptable, but until his death he persisted in sharing their labor, shouldering the burdens of pioneering with the youngest and most virile. He did his writing in the small hours of the night, when the day's toil was done, laboring as conscientiously with his pen as with his hoe. He was no armchair philosopher.

He was not beyond advancing the "practical" apologia for his own consecration to a life of labor, and for his insistence that only through Jewish labor could Palestine become Jewish. "The struggle between the classes among a living people is a social struggle, for employer and employee are members of one nation, whereas among us [in Palestine] the struggle is a national one. The employers are Jews

and the workers are members of different nations. But . . . the struggle is also a political one. The workers are natives, the employers are foreigners. If we do not till the soil with our very own hands, the soil will not be ours—not only not ours in a social, or in a national, but not even in a political sense. The land will not be ours and we shall not be the people of the land. Here, then, we shall also be aliens just as in the lands of the diaspora where, too, there are Jews who rent land . . . and traffic in the fruit of the labor of others." The argument is familiar, and the boundaries suggested for the Jewish State by the Royal Commission are the most impressive proof of its truth.

Yet this argument was wholly incidental for Gordon. His was a deeper truth and a higher goal: labor, the source of that "immediate experience" which is the truly regenerative impulse; labor, through which man joins his life with that of all nature, attunes his spirit to the "universal idea"; labor, which is life itself. Back of the idea of labor there must be not merely social, or political or national aims; "there must be the purpose of recreating life." Nothing less! He informed the concept of labor with a dignity and nobility and significance which it had long since lost in Jewish life. "Our regeneration demands of us a new evaluation of labor in our life as a new foundation for a spiritual possession to be acquired in the future." "The reward of labor is inherent in the work; otherwise it falls short of its innate nobility. . . . Economic rewards taint and profane the work. This is the gospel of *avodah lishmah.*

It is in describing the pure joy of such work that his pen, often so laboriously pedestrian, attains its most lyrical heights. He writes to a friend: "Into your soul there is born a feeling like that of cosmic exaltation, like the clear light of the heavens. Unfathomed depths stir within you. At times you imagine that you, too, are taking root in the soil which you are digging; like all that is growing around, you are nurtured by the light of the sun's rays with food from heaven; that you, too, live a life in common with the tiniest blade of grass, with each flower, each tree; that you live deeply in the heart of Nature, rising from it all and growing straight up into the expanses of the vast world." This was the experience he wished the new Palestine to share with him. We may well believe that out of such experience a new life may flourish.

His interest was centered mainly upon work on the soil. "We farmers," he writes often, and one can sense his pride in the title—it was a patent of nobility. Indeed, he loved to call his comrades "poritz," aristocrat, and if there was a note of gentle banter in the appellation, it carried, too, its burden of high approval. But he found room for the toilers of the city, the laborers of industry, in his scheme of the new life. He wished to reverse the historic process, "to create a life not only strong enough to overcome city influences but to draw the city under the influence of the village." All workers must come to see themeslves not as wage-earners, but as active agents in the creation of a new national life, each enriching it by his labor, each contributing his share to satisfy the needs of all.

He refused to exempt even professional writers, the classic instance of those who "toil not, neither do they spin," from the common duty and sharply scolded the litterateurs who failed to voice the inner truth of the new Palestine because they had not themselves experienced it. His criticism that "Palestinian literature is for Palestine rather than of Palestine" is still valid. "If to give of yourselves fully," he demanded of the writing profession, "to start all anew, is not your duty, how can we demand this of the workers?"

Gordon died in February 1922, after a protracted illness. "He had no fear of death itself," Joseph Baratz tells us, "but grieved over the interval when he would no longer be able to work and would become a burden upon others." He had once said, "If I were able to work to my dying day, I would meet death with joy."

V

How vital and heartening is such a conception when we consider the degenerate Jewish attitude toward physical labor which prevails in the diaspora, and which has by no means been completely exorcised even in Palestine. Typical is the shocked exclamation of a visiting Socialist writer from America when he saw Jews laying a roadbed: "No, no! That's no work for Jews! A Jew has brains, he was created for more important work. Leave this work to the *goyim,* they were made for it!" And Avraham ben Shalom reports, in his fascinating book "Deep Furrows," this response of a farmer's wife to *halutzim* looking for work: "Believe me when I say that I should be only too happy to do everything possible for you. But I get positively heart-sick when I see *Yiddische kinder* working so terribly hard. I simply cannot see them work here."

The new Paletine, the *real* Palestine, the Palestine of the worker, is the flowering of Gordon's spirit. Beneath the hardship and the struggle, the bitter pain of political setbacks and Arab violence, is the consciousness of a holy task, the devotion of a high ideal. As Gordon said, "We are like a woman who for a long time was barren despite all her prayers to God; suddenly she feels she is with child. Every pang brings her joy. Her one fear is that perhaps the pain is not sufficiently strong; perhaps it is not *that* pain." The pangs of creation we cannot escape, if creation it is, but these are the pangs "that give us courage, that give us faith that we shall prevail over all our difficulties." In the spirit of Gordon, we shall prevail!

And the diaspora? Gordon does not shrink from prescribing the same medicine to heal its ills. "The regeneration of the spirit and the body through physical labor, through agricultural labor more especially, the awakening of a national consciousness, the revival of the Hebrew language in speech and in thought is also a pioneering task even if its immediate objective is not Palestine." "We must raise in each country of the diaspora a pioneering movement . . . a great, general movement, especially among the youth."

"Out of Zion. . . ."

Correspondence

ZIONIST LEADERSHIP

Sirs:

I would like to present a view of the Zionist situation which differs greatly from that expressed by Rabbi Blumenfield of Chicago. Being in daily contact with Zionist activity in a sister city, I find myself at odds with Rabbi Blumenfield's analysis and his cure.

In fairness to the Zionist Organization it should be stated that Zionist activity in Chicago seems to fall below the average. There is a Zionist membership in the country of about one to 150 Jewish inhabitants, whereas in Chicago the membership is about one to 250. When it is realized that the country-wide figure includes hundreds of small Jewish communities without any Zionist membership it will emphasize the adverse situation in Chicago. As for the complete lack of prestige which Rabbi Blumenfield complains about and the lack of interest of the Board of Directors, fortunately in our city the same does not hold true. Our directors' meetings are well attended as are our general meetings. The prestige of our group is high, and I am sure that many other medium-sized Jewish communities can boast of at least this much.

However, no one can gainsay the fact that Zionism in America has flunked, and if Palestine has influenced and fertilized Jewish activity in the diaspora, it is in spite of official Zionism. Rabbi Blumenfield remarks that every one seems to blame the situation on insufficient and inadequate leadership. This explanation he does not accept. Instead he goes on to criticize the technique which the Zionists have used. It appears to me his cure harks back to the old fraternal days of Zionism. His specific suggestions for more intimate contacts, smaller meetings and greater participation of other groups are in themselves worthy opinions and could well be adopted by all Zionist districts.

But it seems to me that Rabbi Blumenfield is entirely at variance with the facts when he passes over lightly the element of inadequate

Zionist leadership. Almost every one now realizes that Zionism in America passed its golden opportunity after the Balfour Declaration. Previous to that time Palestine in this country meant emotional propaganda, mass meetings and debates. Nevertheless by 1917 an American brand of Zionism was taking shape with a leadership that could appeal successfully to the American masses. It was then interposed that no road could connect Washington with Pinsk. In the light of history many of us now proclaim that there is no road from Pinsk to Washington. When we question the effectiveness of our leadership we are not dealing with personalities as such. But many Zionists bewail the fact that Zionist leadership did not sufficiently dramatize Zionism and bring into the orbit of Palestine thousands of American Jews who should be with us. There must be some reason for this. Can it be that the proper approach was not made? Zionist speakers still go out to the country with old time speeches which should have been scrapped years ago. Instead of emphasizing the actual growth of Palestine and its real effect on Jewish life, the Zionist leaders have continued to speak as before, and incidentally, the same people are telling the same story.

Within the last few months we have been visited here by Goldie Myerson, Dr. Bernard Joseph and Isaac Hos. Each of these Palestinians has told our people in concrete terms about life in Palestine. It is an amazing revelation to us that this type of propaganda is profoundly effective. People long to hear about shoe factories, about ships and about roads, etc., in Palestine. Is there not some lesson in this?

True enough, Palestine must ultimately mean more to world Jewry than things material. But our people are after all just human beings. They tire of academic speeches. After years of Zionist effort American Jews are still ignorant of even such elementary subjects as the geography of Palestine.

Therefore I propose that propaganda efforts be directed to specific problems in Palestine and further, that as many Jews as possible be given an opportunity to invest in Palestine and thus to have a direct contact with the country. Of course it is not easy now to sell shares for Nachshon. But would that our leaders had seen the light twenty years ago; by now the rank and file of Zionists would more easily see the value and soundness of Palestine investment.

Rabbi Blumenfield regrets the lack of fellowship among Zionists. But I submit that a fellowship deriving from a partnership is a sound basis for a new Zionist fraternalism both as between Jews in America and our brothers in Palestine. Actions speak louder than words, and in this manner what we accomplish in Palestine not only in the material field but also in social and spiritual regeneration, will have a fructifying effect on life in the diaspora.

Rabbi Blumenfield remarks that every one blames the Zionist situation on unsound leadership. It must be that people in general are guided by a true instinct. I am sure that thousands of Zionists will agree with my reaction to these articles.

LAWRENCE W. CROHN, President,
Zionist Organization of Detroit

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